



“CELEBRATE 2000 I HAVE A DREAM”

**“I have a dream that my four
children will one day live in a
nation where they will not be**

**judged by the color of their skin but by the content
of their character...”** — from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s “I Have A Dream” speech

As we celebrate the birth of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., many will recall the prophetic words of the renowned civil rights leader in his famous “I Have A Dream” speech given on the steps of Washington, D.C.’s Lincoln Memorial in 1963. They are words that, almost four decades later, still resonate with conciliation, hope and promise.

In his speech, Dr. King spoke of “great vaults of opportunity in this nation” that should be available to all African Americans. In the years since Dr. King’s stirring call to action, much progress has been made in the areas of economic justice, education, and civil rights, among others. And although much remains to be accomplished, the legacy of Dr. King’s dream for his people – and their children – continues to inspire social action and improvement in the lives of all African Americans.

The promise of a better life, of building a more solid foundation for children, is what inspired Prop. 10 – an initiative benefiting not only African American children but all children throughout the State of California.

“One of the reasons why Prop. 10 is so important is because it proposes to offer services for young children across a wide socio-economic spectrum, not just to the disadvantaged and vulnerable,” said Dr.

Helen DuPlessis, Chief Medical Officer of LA Care, which provides health care services for 60 percent of the MediCal population in the state. “Prop. 10 has the potential for improving the coordination of services in California and identifying, promoting and implementing the best and most effective programs and services for kids.”

Prop. 10 is an unprecedented investment in the health and welfare of California’s youngest children from the prenatal period to age five. Studies have shown that a child’s experiences in the

first five years of life have a profound impact on a child’s educational, social and economic future. The November 1998 statewide initiative adding a 50-cent tax per pack on cigarettes will raise an estimated \$700 million in its first year to support early childhood development and anti-tobacco education programs.

Another key element of Prop. 10 is its emphasis on community involvement. Each of the state’s 58 counties must create a plan for their use of Prop. 10 funds based on input from the community, families and child advocacy groups. The County Commissions and community members will formulate their specific early childhood development efforts with these critical statistics in mind concerning the state’s youngest residents. For example, early and comprehensive prenatal care saves \$3 for every dollar invested; high-quality child care before the age of three can improve children’s scores on reading and math tests when they enter school; and every dollar spent on high-quality pre-school programs for at-risk

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10 IT'S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS

Welcome to the premiere issue of *It’s All About The Kids*. This newsletter is presented by the California Children and Families Commission, which is funded by Prop. 10, the 50-cent tobacco tax passed by California voters in 1998 to fund early childhood development and anti-tobacco education programs.

It’s All About The Kids is designed to provide you with news and information you can use on early childhood development issues. We also hope that this newsletter will serve as a tool for you to get involved in your local Prop. 10 efforts. If you have information or resources to share, or if you have questions about Prop. 10 and early childhood development issues in the African American community, please contact us at the address printed on the bottom of page 3. 🖐



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children reduces the significant financial costs for special education, juvenile crime, and welfare and results in higher adult earnings.

"With Prop. 10, communities have been mobilized for action so that they are intimately and intricately involved in the implementation process and in public health efforts that protect and improve the lives of children," said Patricia Etem, Executive Director of the Los Angeles Regional Tobacco Control Community Linkage Project. "One of the more powerful messages from Dr. King was the idea that we as a people will frame the issue, tell you what the constraints are and work with you toward a solution."

As Dr. King stated, his dream is one that is "deeply rooted in the American Dream." And all parents, regardless of race, share the dream of providing the best possible start in life for their children.

"We know that early intervention works and increases the probability that a child will reach his or her developmental potential," said DuPlessis. "I think that Dr. King's dream was also about the possibilities and potential for our children, which Prop. 10 will help address through support of effective programs and services." 🖐

A DREAM FOR MY CHILD

***It's All About The Kids* invites you to participate in our A Dream For My Child Contest.**

If you are the parent of a child born in January or February 2000, please tell us in 50 words or less what your dream is for your child's future. All entries must include your name, the name and birth date of your child, your address and phone number and a photo of your child.

If your entry is selected, *It's All About The Kids* will publish your essay and child's photo in an upcoming issue! Please send all entries to: A Dream For My Child, c/o P.O. Box 481296, Los Angeles, California, 90048. Photos will not be returned. 🖐



THE ROAD TO GREATNESS:

HOW FAMILY PAVES THE WAY

In celebration of Black History Month, *It's All About The Kids* looks at the lives of a few of the famous African Americans whose lives and accomplishments we celebrate in the month of February.

They've all achieved greatness and renown in the areas of sports, the performing arts and literature. The one thing they all share – in addition to their significant contributions to history – is the encouragement and support from family which helped form the foundation for their future endeavors.

Although Earl Woods didn't know it at the time, practicing his golf swing while his six-month old son Tiger watched from his high chair was just one of the parenting techniques that helped lay the groundwork for his son's future success. The elder Woods said he just wanted his son's company as he practiced hitting golf balls in the garage. But he noted that this simple activity kept Tiger amazed for hours at a time. By the age of two Tiger was perfecting his own golf swing, and when still a toddler, Tiger sunk a hole-in-one. Twice.

Almost 25 years later, Tiger Woods has redefined the game of golf, becoming the sport's winningest and, arguably, most famous player. As recounted in Earl Woods' biography, *Playing Through*, he and his wife Tida stimulated their young son's imagination and talents, creating an environment in which he could flourish. Not only did he receive early training in a sport that he demonstrated a natural talent for, but Tiger's mother also educated her pre-school-aged son in math and other subjects that challenged the mind of her young prodigy.

Studies have proven that a child's early years, from birth through age five, are critical in terms of social, emotional and intellectual development. Likewise, the influence of parents and/or other

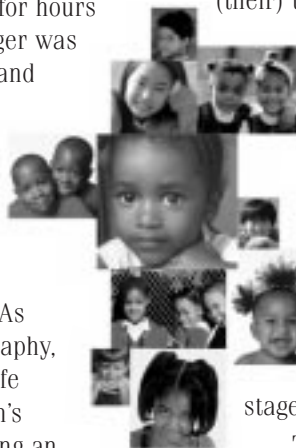
caregivers during this formative time is extremely important. According to Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D. of the National Parenting Center, "Every infant is an active learner. While it may seem that many of the actions (an infant) engages in during the day are random and spontaneous... virtually every movement and sound has a purpose that contributes to (their) understanding of the world."

"The importance of children getting a strong and healthy start in life cannot be underestimated," said Dr. Edward S. Curry, Chief of Pediatrics at Kaiser

Permanente, Southern California. "The positive influences from parents or other significant role models in a child's life set the stage for their future achievement."

The most significant role model in actor/comedian Bill Cosby's young life was his mother, Anna. The oldest of four boys raised in the Philadelphia projects, Cosby's father was an abusive alcoholic who abandoned the family when Cosby was a child. His mother, who worked as a cleaning lady, managed to provide for her sons while instilling in them a love of learning and a sense of humor. Anna Cosby would often read to her sons and used her own wry ways to keep them in check.

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"The only thing I had to give him," said Anna Cosby in *Cosby: The Life of A Living Legend*, "was plenty of love and oh, dear God, I gave him all I had. But success comes from within and Bill was determined to be something."

What Cosby ultimately became was a household name in entertainment. In addition to a legendary stand-up and recording career, Cosby blazed trails in television and in film, as well. His homespun humor transcends race, bringing people together in fondly shared remembrances of the poignant and amusing moments that form the family bond.

"A child can thrive in many different environments," said Dr. Curry. "What is important in the big picture is that the parent or caregiver interacting with that child provides the love, support and nurturing to help that child thrive."

In addition, storytelling was important in the household of Toni Morrison, but the influence of that family tradition put her on an entirely different path to future success. Morrison is one of today's most celebrated and popular novelists and in 1993 became the first African American to win the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature. The award was for her collected works including *Song of Solomon*, *Sula*, *Jazz* and *Beloved*. The latter Morrison novel was recently adapted as a feature

film starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover. Morrison was also the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988.

Her talent for storytelling grew from family tradition, when her parents and grandparents thrilled the young Morrison with ghost stories and other tales. And even though the family did not have a lot of money, Morrison's mother belonged to a book club and taught her daughter that books were something to be treasured.

In a *New York Times Magazine* interview following the Nobel Prize award, Morrison said that her success simply serves to encourage other young Black children to do the same.

"It was very important for young Black people to see a Black person (win the Nobel Prize because)... there were probably young people in South Central Los Angeles or Selma who weren't quite sure that they could do it. But seeing me up there might encourage them to write one of those books I'm desperate to read. And that made me happy..."

The stories about the backgrounds of these Black Americans clearly demonstrate the important role of the parent as their child's first teacher. Whatever it is your child is destined to become, engaging your child in reading, playing and other activities has a definite impact on their lives as they, too, follow the road to greatness. 🖐

WHAT IS 10?

Prop. 10 is an unprecedented effort to promote, support and improve educational, health and child care programs for California's children ages prenatal to five. The monies collected from the tax – an estimated \$700 million this year – specifically target programs that will give the state's youngest children the best possible foundation during their crucial developmental years.

Another key element of Prop. 10 is its emphasis on community involvement. Each of the state's 58 counties must create a plan for their use of Prop. 10 funds based on input from the community, families and others involved in the lives of young children.

Eighty percent of the revenues from the tax on cigarettes are distributed to volunteer County Commissions throughout the state based on county birth rate data and according to the county where the birth mother resides. County Commissions develop strategic plans for spending the funds after receiving extensive public input on the needs of the local communities.

Prop. 10 presents a unique opportunity for parents, caregivers and all California residents to have a hand in shaping the most positive and nurturing environment possible for our youngest residents. 🖐

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS

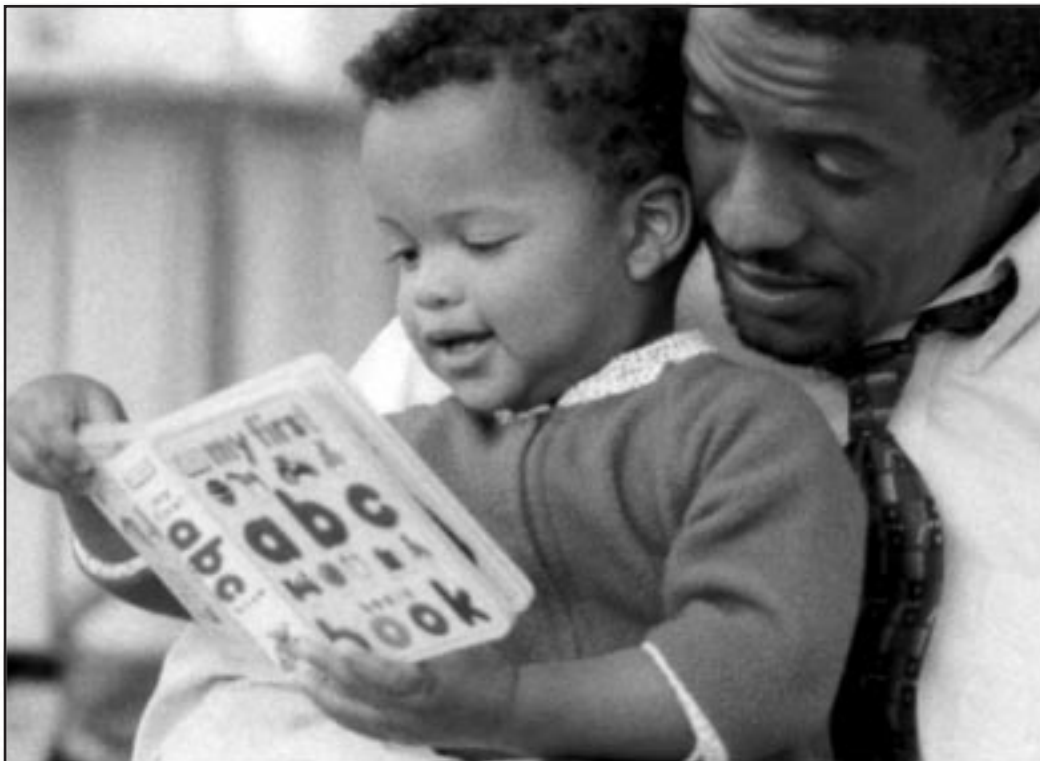
INFORMATION & RESOURCES

The California Children & Families Commission, which is funded by Prop. 10, now has a new 800-number as part of its public education efforts.

The 800-number, which serves both the English and Spanish-speaking communities, is a resource that will provide callers with written information on how to make the most of a child's early years and how to stop smoking. To receive information on these issues, call **1-800-KIDS-025**. Operators are available to assist you from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Monday through Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays. 🖐

It's All About The Kids
P.O. Box 481296
Los Angeles, CA. 90048





YOU are your **Child's** FIRST TEACHER.

Years before they enter the classroom, and long before they can walk or talk, even tiny babies are learning. So hold them. Read to them. Play with them. Because the little things you do together will lay a foundation for a lifetime of learning. For information on how to make the most of your child's early years call **1-800-KIDS-025**. It's all about the kids.

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